

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 902

INFO USCINCSO FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 7079

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: LUNCHEON FOR JOVITO VILLALBA AND URD LEADERS

REF: CARACAS 6929 AND PREVIOUS

1. LATEST (AND PERHAPS LAST BEFORE VACATION HIATUS) LUNCHEON AT REVISENCE FOR VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WAS IN HONOR OF JOVITO VILLALBA AND DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN UNION (URD) LEADERS AUGUST 15. "EL MAESTRO" VILLALBA, DESPITE PAST SWIPES AT "YANKEE IMPERIALISM." WAS CLEARLY DELIGHTED AT INVITATION AND AND BROUGHT ALONG THREE MODERATE URD LEADERS WHO KNOW US AND HAVE ENJOYED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY PERSONNEL. JOVITO, 65, ONLY CANDIDATE FROM FAMED "GENERATION OF 28" CLAIMED THAT HE HAS NEVER ADVOCATED ANIMOSITY TOWARD UNITED STATES. WHILE WE MAY TAKE PROTESTATIONS OF ADMIRATION FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON AND LINCOLN, WHICH HE VOICED TO US REPEATEDLY, WITH A FEW GRAINS OF SALT, THE FACT IS HE REMAINS AN IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL FORCE IN THIS COUNTRY. IN A CLOSE RACE HE COULD EXERT INFLUENCE OUT OF PROPORTION TO URD'S STRENGTH. IT IS, THEREFORE, WORTHWHILE FOR US TO FOSTER AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH HIM, PARTICULARLY SINCE HE IS SO PLEASED AT THE ATTENTION.

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2. AMONG OBSERVATIONS VOUCHSAFED BY JOVITO AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE THE FOLLOWING:

--JOVITO HAS NEVER BEEN PRO-COMMUNIST AND, SINCE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VENEZUELA KNIFED HIS PARTY IN THE RECENT NOMINATING CONVENTION OF THE NEW FORCE, FROM WHICH URD BROKE AWAY, HE IS LESS THAN EVER INCLINED TO SUPPORT ITS AIMS.

--THOUGH HE IS FIRMLY IN FAVOR OF VENEZUELA SECURING BEST POSSIBLE DEAL IN DEVELOPMENT AND SALE OF ITS PETROLEUM, HE AGREED THAT MY OUTLINE OF GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TREATY, WHEREBY NEEDED US INVESTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ORINOCO TAR BELT WOULD BE GUARANTEED A FAIR RETURN BY VENEZUELA IN EXCHANGE FOR TARIFF-FREE ENTRY INTO US OF PETROLEUM FROM THE BELT, SHOULD BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

--VENEZUELA'S AGRICULTURAL SITUATION IS A DISASTER AND HE AND HIS PARTY ARE QUITE RECEPTIVE TO US IDEAS FOR IMPROVING VENEZUELAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND MARKETS. HE EXPRESSED PROFOUND ADMIRATION FOR US FARMER'S PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY.

--IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION ABOUT POLITICAL PERSUASION OF VENEZUELAN FARM DWELLER, HE FRANKLY ANSWERED HE DOES NOT KNOW AND IS SURE OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS ALSO DO NOT KNOW. HE POINTED OUT THAT VENEZUELA DIFFERS FROM OLDER DEMOCRACIES IN THAT ITS YOUNG POLITICAL PARTIES LACK RURAL BASE OF COUNTERPARTS IN, FOR INSTANCE, US AND GREAT BRITAIN.

--PRESIDENT CALDERA WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY STOP IN CUBA ON HIS WAY TO UN AND CASTRO VERY LIKELY WILL PAY VISIT TO VENEZUELA BEFORE ELECTIONS, BUT COPEI IS WRONG TO BELIEVE THIS WILL BRING IN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF VOTES.

--COPEI ADMINISTRATION'S PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTING ANOTHER LNG PLANT IN THE EAST WILL NOT WORK OUT BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH NON-ASSOCIATED GAS IN THAT AREA TO MAKE PLANT PROFITABLE.

3. JOVITO LEFT SAYING HE AND HIS GROUP HAD HAD AN ENLIGHTENING AND ENJOYABLE SESSION WHICH HE WANTS TO REPEAT AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE ELECTIONS. HIS ASSOCIATES TOLD MEMBERS OF MY STAFF ON DEPARTURE THEY WERE THOROUGHLY GRATIFIED BY EMBASSY ATTENTION AND CHANCE TO MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN TO US.

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